

## Opinion

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### Choose carefully after Harriet Miers

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Harriet Miers' withdrawal as a nominee to the United States Supreme Court should provide an opportunity for a well-reasoned choice for the court's next associate justice.

Miers, who will remain White House counsel, didn't seem to please anyone -- except President Bush. Critics found her a disappointing nominee, a personal friend of the president who lacked essential qualifications for the job. The loudest dissent came from conservatives who wanted a nominee with a record of supporting conservative causes.

With the noise from the uproar over Miers still ringing in Bush's ears, the president will have to proceed with caution when choosing the next nominee. The Bush administration will be bombarded with advice from across the political spectrum. It's a tough dance, trying to find someone who appeals to social conservatives but who won't raise the hackles of Democrats.

Ideally, partisanship would be set aside in favor of common sense and good values. The position of associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court is extremely powerful and will have an effect on all Americans' lives for years to come. The court and the American people deserve a justice who is fair, wise and balanced with the appropriate experience.

As Sen. Jim Jeffords, I-Vt., said in a statement Thursday: "This critical seat on the Supreme Court should be filled by someone who can demonstrate an independent and mainstream judicial philosophy. The next Supreme Court justice must serve all Americans, not just some narrow slice of the American electorate."

Let's move forward from the Miers' misstep and hope that the next nominee rises to the challenges of the U.S. Supreme Court.